

Abstract of the Disclosure

An internet and/or intranet based database search system and method for conducting searches of highly confidential records such as individual patient medical records and to automate the process of securing required approvals to make such records available to a properly authorized and authenticated requesting party. The system's central premise is that the patient has a fundamental right to the confidentiality of their personal medical records and should control that right through specific, informed consent each time that a party requests to receive them. It reinforces the widely held conception of privacy in general as well as of the sanctity of the doctor/patient relationship by granting the doctor the right, subject to the patient's express permission, to initiate a search request. At the same time, it provides an expedited and cost-efficient means for transfer of such records as demanded by many healthcare reform proposals and gives the repositories where these records are held the right to stipulate the specific terms and conditions that must be fulfilled before they will release documents entrusted to their care, thereby substantially reducing the risk of litigation alleging breaches of patient confidentiality. And it carries out all of these legitimate interests in a way that is fast, simple to use and easy to audit. The system optionally includes a billing mechanism to pay for any added cost associated with providing this additional protection; and in its preferred embodiment, is applicable to both digital as well as non-digital records.